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UNCLAS HARARE 002618

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PD, AF/S, AF/RA, AF/PDPA
NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAQ KMDR ZI

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IRAQ; HARARE

- ¶1. Under headline "Iraq: U.S. war drums continue" the pro-government weekly "The Sunday Mirror" dedicated its November 17 editorial to accusing the United States of itching for a military showdown against Iraq irrespective of Iraq's acceptance of United Nations inspectors. "If Iraq so much as denies any accusation leveled against it from now onwards, the U.S. could use military action," the editorial declares.

Excerpts:

- ¶2. "The United States and Britain continue their preparations for the invasion of Iraq despite the fact that Iraq has accepted the UN resolution for disarmament. The U.S. President, George Bush, has vowed to topple Iraq President Saddam Hussein by military force and the much-awaited invasion is supposed to achieve just that. So that, Iraq's acceptance of UN inspectors rather than being welcome, is perceived in Washington as a move calculated to delay the military action. . . On the other hand, the U.S. will be looking for the slightest excuse to launch an attack on Iraq. Asked about his understanding of the UN conditions on Iraq, George Bush said, 'Zero tolerance. . .we will not tolerate any deception, denial or deceit, period.' That means, if Iraq so much as denies any accusation leveled against it from now onwards, the U.S. could use military action. And, as the U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell put it, such military action would have the objective "to disarm (Iraq) through changing the regime.'

SULLIVAN